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SUBJECT: KIRKUK BOYCOTT NEGOTIATIONS STALL

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Classified By: PRT Kirkuk Team Leader Howard Keegan
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) This is a PRT Kirkuk reporting cable.

12. (C) SUMMARY: The Turkman Bloc met with the Kirkuk Brotherhood List (KBL) on March 9 as part of their ongoing negotiations to end the 15 month-long boycott of the Kirkuk Provincial Council by the Turkman Bloc. Negotiations stalled after the two sides could not reach agreement on the Turkmani language issue and appear to have reached a temporary impasse. END SUMMARY.

BOYCOTT NEGOTIATIONS STALL ON LANGUAGE ISSUE

13. (C) The Turkman Bloc and the Kirkuk Brotherhood List (KBL) met on March 9 to continue their negotiations regarding the Turkman boycott of the Kirkuk Provincial Council (PC.) The KBL opened the negotiation session with KPC Chairman Rizgar Ali urging both political blocs to reconcile for the benefit of Kirkuk. The Turkman Bloc indicated their willingness to wait for a federal judge to review the constitutionality of Turkmani becoming one of the official languages of Kirkuk Province on the condition that the KBL agree to include the Turkmani language on municipal building signs within the Kirkuk city limits. The KBL would not accede to this point, citing the need to wait for a legal review of Article 4 of the Iraqi Constitution. The two sides could not reach agreement on the language issue and barely discussed the second condition of the allocation of governmental leadership positions to the Turkman Bloc.

KBL CALLS FOR THE ARAB BLOC TO JOIN IN NEGOTIATIONS

14. (C) The KBL called for future negotiation sessions to include the Arab Bloc. The Arab Bloc ended a similar boycott of the PC in early December 2007. The KBL feels that they are unable to sign any agreement with the Turkman Bloc without including the Arab Bloc, especially regarding discussions on the creation of a second Deputy Governor position. The KBL intends to respect the December 2007 accord with the Arab Bloc calling for one Deputy Governor to be filled by an Arab. The KBL indicated that once the Provincial Powers Law (PPL) is implemented, the KBL would support the creation of a second Deputy Governor position, currently required by the draft PPL, to be designated for a Turkman. For their part, members of the Arab Bloc have repeatedly threatened to boycott the PC should a second Deputy Governor position be conceded to the Turkmans as part of any agreement with the KBL prior to the PPL being placed into effect.

BOTTOM LINE, NO SIGNS, NO AGREEMENT

15. (C) When the KBL again insisted on signing a document agreeing to five of the seven points, the negotiator for the Turkman Bloc, Ali Mahdi, indicated that "without an agreement to the language issue, the Turkman Bloc will not sign anything." Members of the Turkman Bloc insisted that as a sign of its intention to sign the agreement, the KBL should include the Turkmani language on municipal building signs within the Kirkuk city limits. Furthermore, Mahdi indicated that the Turkman Bloc would not attend any future negotiation meetings without an agreement on the language issue.

COMMENTS

16. (C) The KBL and Turkman Bloc have drawn lines in the sand and appear to have reached a temporary impasse on negotiations to resolve the Turkman boycott of the KPC. Unlike previous sessions, the Turkman Bloc arrived prepared to negotiate with the KBL and willing to make progress. The only condition they were unwilling to negotiate was the Turkmani language issue. The KBL proved unwilling to concede on this point. On Mar 8, prior to this negotiation session, KBL lead negotiators had indicated to the PRT that they could accept this temporary sign painting measure until the legal issues were resolved by a federal judge. However, the PUK and KDP reversed their position in less than 24 hours, indicating that they may have consulted with their party heads after the March 8 session. The KDP has long resented the Iraqi Turkman Front (ITF) and is purposely snubbing the Turkman Bloc. The Turkman Bloc seems ready to return and knows that the Deputy Governor position will only be settled by the Provincial Powers Law.

17. (C) The Arab Bloc is sitting anxiously on the sidelines

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afraid that the KBL and Turkman Bloc might agree to a second Deputy Governor position. Members of the Arab Bloc have argued that this would break the KBL-Arab Bloc agreement, and that they would then return to a boycott. The KBL, for its part, seems content to respect the terms of the KBL-Arab Bloc agreement and has resisted Turkman Bloc calls for a second Deputy Governor position prior to the implementation of the Provincial Powers Law. The KBL call to include the Arab Bloc in future negotiations is most likely a result of the Arab Bloc pressuring the KBL for inclusion to watch both sides. In the end, there is no trust between parties in Kirkuk. END COMMENT.
CROCKER